



San Diego City Attorney CASEY GWINN

MEDIA RELEASE

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PET STORE OWNERS SENTENCED FOR ANIMAL ABUSE

San Diego, CA (October 11, 2001) — Two pet store owners neglected their animals and ignored complaints for too long. Today, Denise Alexandra Oteo and Moriancumer Oteo, former owners of Casa de Pets pet store, 3915 Ohio Street, San Diego, pleaded no contest in San Diego Superior Court and were sentenced on five counts of misdemeanor animal abuse. The 415-count criminal case was filed by Deputy City Attorney Joan McNamara of the San Diego City Attorney Consumer and Environmental Protection Unit. Several weeks ago the Oteos sold Casa de Pets.

San Diego Superior Court Commissioner Sandra L. Berry placed the defendants on five years probation and ordered each of them to serve ninety days in custody. The ninety days custody was stayed pending successful completion of the following probation terms. Each defendant was ordered not to own or possess any animals for resale, not to own or work in a pet store, and not to acquire any more animals at their home in Boulevard. They were also ordered to spay or neuter all dogs and cats at their home, to forfeit two snakes impounded by the California Department of Fish and Game, and to pay \$1,634 in restitution to the San Diego Department of Animal Control. In addition, they were ordered to allow the Department of Animal Control to inspect their premises without a warrant.

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The criminal case alleged that Denise and Moriancumer Oteo, doing business as Casa de Pets, failed to provide proper care and nutrition for puppies, kittens, iguanas, snakes, guinea pigs, feeder mice and rats that were for sale in their pet store. The criminal complaint also alleged that the Oteos failed to provide adequate food and water for ninety-three animals at their home in Boulevard, California.

Between January 25, 2001, and May 24, 2001, the San Diego Department of Animal Control responded to ongoing complaints regarding the treatment of animals at Casa de Pets and inspected the pet store on several occasions. The Department of Animal Control found sick kittens on display for sale, animals without access to water, puppies and kittens in cages dirty with animal feces, a dead Spiny Tailed Iguana in an aquarium, a Red Tail Boa Constrictor with a severe case of mouth rot, reptile cages with dirty water containers, and feeder mice in cages that were dirty and saturated with urine. During one inspection, twenty-four sick kittens were found in the pet store's grooming area. The kittens had eye and nasal discharge and their hindquarters were covered in feces. The sickest kitten couldn't walk, was almost dead, and had to be euthanized.

City Attorney Casey Gwinn said, "This case is one of the most egregious cases of animal neglect we have seen. For a pet store to keep animals in these deplorable conditions is unconscionable. This case is a reminder to all pet owners that animals deserve to be and must be treated humanely. Those who don't will be held accountable."

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